

OPEN AND SHUT?

Tuesday, June 25, 2013

Open Access: Springer tightens rules on self-archiving

Last month [Danny Kingsley](#) – Executive Officer of the Australian Open Access Support Group (AOASG) – [highlighted](#) a number of publishers that have recently changed their self-archiving ([Green OA](#)) policies.



Amongst those named by Kingsley was [Springer](#) – the world's second-largest journal publisher – which changed its self-archiving policy earlier this year.

While Springer had previously insisted that where a funder required papers to be deposited in a central repository like [PubMed Central](#) this could only be done after a 12-month embargo, it allowed authors to post their papers in

institutional repositories immediately. Under the new policy, however, the 12-month embargo has been extended to cover papers posted in institutional repositories as well. (Although authors can still post copies of their accepted manuscripts on their personal web sites without embargo).

Kingsley concluded that the change was likely a response to the new [UK OA policy](#) introduced by Research Councils UK (RCUK) on April 1st. Elsewhere, OA advocate [Stevan Harnad](#) has described the change as “[Springer Silliness](#)”, and a Springer author has expressed “[confusion](#)” over what the policy actually means.

In the hope of clarifying matters I sent a list of questions to Springer. I publish the answers to those questions below exactly as they were provided by Springer, which answered them on condition that I published them “in full, uninterrupted, and unedited (including hyperlinks) as a cohesive whole”.

I would simply note that in answering my question on whether it had any evidence that self-archiving has had a negative impact on it, Springer cites a survey undertaken by The Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP). I would invite interested parties to read [an interview](#) I did with the Chief Executive of ALPSP [Audrey McCulloch](#) about the survey last year.

Answers by Eric Merkel-Sobotta (Corporate Communications, Springer) to questions on self-archiving from Richard Poynder

25 June 2013

Q: As I understand it, Springer recently changed its Green OA policy. Can you confirm that this is so, and say when the change was made?

A: Yes, it is true that Springer modified its self-archiving policy earlier this year. The changes were made in order to make the policy as simple and consistent as possible, while also ensuring the sustainability of both green and gold open access models.

As a result of the changes, the same embargo rules now apply, whether the deposit is voluntary or mandatory, and whether the article is deposited in a funder repository or an institutionally managed repository.

We believe that this is unambiguous and simpler than policies which apply different rules according to who manages the repository, or those policies which allow self-archiving only if it is not required (!).

- Home
- About Richard Poynder
- Blog: *Open and Shut?*
- The State of Open Access
- The Basement Interviews
- Open Access Interviews
- Essays on Open Access
- Archive

Blogs, News & More:

Interview 1: Richard Poynder

Interview 2: Richard Poynder

Interview 3: Richard Poynder

DOAJ

BASE

LENS

Digital Koans

LSE Impact Blog

Heather Morrison

The Scholarly Kitchen

Open Access India

PLoS Blogs

Redalyc

SPARC Europe

IP Watchdog



Search This Blog

Popular Posts



Open Access: “Information wants to be free”? (A print version of this eBook is

available here) Earlier this year I was invited to discuss with Georgia Institute of Technology librarians...



P2P: The very core of the world to come In the first part of this interview Michel

Bauwens, the creator of The Foundation for P2P



Tweets by @RickyPo



Richard Poynder
@RickyPo

Replying to @RickyPo

The document added that staff said there were “barriers to publication of scientific research which inhibited the ability of faculty to contribute scientific findings during a world-wide pandemic.”

2m



Richard Poynder
@RickyPo

University of Florida researchers pressured to destroy COVID-19 data, told not to criticize DeSantis: report thehill.com/homenews/stat e...

The State of
Open Access
Predatory publishing
Institutional Repositories
Green OA Gold
OA Self-archiving
Copyright
Basement Interviews
OA Interviews

OA Essays Open
Access in Serbia
Open Access in
India Open Access in
Egypt ScienceDirect
Open Access
in California
OA in Latin
America Open
Access in the Humanities
MDPI Preprints Selecting
Reviewers Global
Research
Council OA Big
Deal Open
Notebook Science
Elsevier Gates
Foundation OA in
South Africa OA in
France SSRN OA &
the Humanities
Timothy Gowers Harold
Varmus Peter
Suber OA in Poland
OA Embargoes
Big Deal Finch
Report Jeffrey Beall
ALPSP OA
Mandates PLOS
Peer Review
Springer BioMed
Central Free
Software Digital
Preservation Dove
Medical OA in Russia
Radical OA Almost OA
HEFCE Frontiers

As you know, there is widespread, if not universal, acceptance that systematic and widespread author manuscript deposit ("green" open access) of subscription-based journal articles in repositories requires an embargo period in order to ensure the sustainability of the journals.

Q: Some OA advocates would question that assumption. Certainly they would say that there is no evidence that embargoes have had a negative impact on publishers to date. Does Springer have any evidence that it has been negatively affected by self-archiving? If so, can you say something about that evidence?

A: It is clearly not feasible to say at precisely what point immediate free access to articles via repositories would cause widespread disruption of the subscription model, but have a look at the ALPSP "one question survey":

<http://www.publishingresearch.net/documents/ALPSPPotentialresultsofsixmonthembargofv.pdf>

and the comment related to it on Scholarly Kitchen:

<http://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2012/06/06/the-alp-sp-report-on-six-month-embargo-mandates-stm-journals-die-slowly-social-science-journals-die-quickly/>

However, a model in which the costs of publishing are paid by subscribing institutions who pay voluntarily despite the fact that the material they are subscribing to is all freely available does not seem, from first principles, to be desirable or stable.

That is why Springer, which has been committed to open access in deeds, not just words, for almost 10 years, is focused on offering two models which we believe to be stable and sustainable: embargoed green open access, and immediate gold open access.

Q: Can you confirm that the policy change was primarily a response to the new RCUK OA policy? If not, why was the change made?

A: No, it was not. We modified the policy to make it simple and consistent for our authors, for funders and for our employees, as all forms of open access continue to grow.

Q: How was news of the change conveyed to the research community? Did Springer put out a press release for instance?

A: Our policies on archiving are communicated very clearly to authors during the journal publishing/production process. We do not primarily communicate to our authors via the media.

Q: Can you specify exactly how the policy has changed?

A: Springer previously required a 12-month embargo period for deposit in *funder* repositories and only allowed this if the funder *required* deposit, but did not specify an embargo period for deposit in *institutional* repositories.

In order to ensure that green open access deposit remains sustainable on a large scale, we are standardizing the embargo period for *all* repository archiving to 12 months.

To be clear: this means that Springer authors can deposit into a funder repository after a 12-month embargo period **even if the funder does not require the author to do so**.

Authors will still be entitled to make their accepted manuscript available via their personal website without any embargo.

Q: You may know that OA advocate Stevan Harnad argues that the change Springer has made is "inconsequential". As he put it, "There is no difference between the authors' 'own websites' and their own institution's 'repository'." I assume you would not agree? So how does Springer distinguish between an institutional repository and an author's personal website? It is clearly important that authors can understand this difference.

Alternatives, explained why he believes the var...



PLOS CEO
Alison Mudditt discusses new OA agreement with the University of

California

The Public Library of Science (PLOS) and the University of California (UC) have today announced a two-year agreement designed to make...



The OA Interviews:
Taylor & Francis' Deborah Kahn discusses Dove

Medical Press

Please note the postscript to this interview here The open-access publisher Dove Medical Press has a controversial past and I have writ...



The Open Access Interviews:
Publisher MDPI Headquartered in Basel,

Switzerland, the Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute, or more usually MDPI, is an open access publisher...



Copyright: the
immoveable barrier that open access advocates underestimated

In calling for research papers to be made freely available open access advocates promised that doing so would lead to a simpler, less cos...



The Open Access Interviews:
OMICS Publishing Group's Srinu

Babu Gedela

***Update: On August 26th 2016, the US government (Federal Trade Commission) announced that it has charged OMICS with making false claims, ...



Community Action Publishing:
Broadening the Pool

We are today seeing growing dissatisfaction with the pay-to-publish model for open access. As this requires authors (or their funders or ins...



Robin Osborne
on the state of Open Access: Where are we, what still needs to be done?

One of a series exploring the current state of Open Access

A: Commenting on one sentence taken out of context is not helpful. However, we believe the difference between author's personal website and an institutional repository is widely understood. www.eprints.org describes institutional repositories, e.g. hosted by Eprint, as "a collection of digital documents [... which] share the same metadata, making their contents interoperable with one another." Author websites on the other hand serve various purposes and are not specifically created for document collection.

Q: *You said that the change was intended to provide full support for both Gold and Green. How does extending an embargo from 0 to 12 months provide support for Green OA? It surely serves to weaken it?*

A: We have eliminated from our policy the distinction between institutional repositories and others, such as subject and funder repositories, and created one simple rule that applies across the board -- authors may deposit in any repository they like, and regardless of whether they are required by a mandate or not, as long as the embargo period is observed.

This supports green OA by making it sustainable, and therefore making it possible for Springer as a publisher to actively encourage and facilitate it. It also helps to clarify the respective benefits of the Green and Gold models, each of which is likely to have a place going forward.

Q: *I wonder if perhaps SHERPA/RoMEO has misunderstood Springer's current policy, or has yet to note the change. Taylor & Francis is listed as a Yellow publisher. It is not clear to me that Springer's policy is significantly different — both publishers appear to have a 12 month embargo. Do you believe the two policies are sufficiently different to warrant the different classification they have been given?*

A: Springer's revised repository archiving policy continues to be classified as "green" as confirmed by SHERPA/RoMEO. We allow self-archiving of the author's version to the author's personal website without embargo.

And just to remind everyone: we were the first "traditional" publisher to offer an open access option for the majority of its 2,000 subscription-based journal portfolio — the hybrid OA model, Springer Open Choice — in 2004. Since then, we have refined and extended this publication model.

In 2008, Springer acquired BioMed Central, making Springer the world's largest open access publisher.

In 2010 Springer launched SpringerOpen, a new OA portfolio that includes journals covering all areas of science and in January 2012, the SpringerOpen journal portfolio was joined by *SpringerPlus*, an interdisciplinary open access journal publishing research in all disciplines. Currently, we publish more than 350 OA journals, and last year, we expanded our open access program to SpringerOpen books as an addition to its established open access journal portfolio.

Q: *Indeed, but this all relates to Gold OA, not Green OA. I suspect that OA advocates will conclude that the link here is that — in light of the RCUK policy — Springer has decided that if it extends its embargo it will be able to persuade researchers to pay to publish in BioMed Central or SpringerOpen, rather than self-archive papers published in Springer's subscription journals. In other words, they are likely to suspect that Springer has changed its OA policy in the way it has in order to increase its revenues, rather than protect existing revenues. Would those that conclude this have a point? Why? Why not?*

A: We modified our policy because, with open access (both green and gold) becoming a more and more substantial part of scientific publishing, it was vital to ensure that our policies in this area were consistent and fully sustainable. For a publisher, sustainability certainly includes maintaining the revenue stream which supports the many activities that add value during the publication process.

Q: *As you note, Springer pioneered Hybrid OA in 2004, when it launched Open Choice. OA advocates are very sceptical about Hybrid OA, not just because it is generally more expensive than pure Gold OA, but because it allows publishers to "double dip" (i.e. earn revenue from article-processing charges*

(OA), the Q&A below is with Robin Osborne , Professor of Ancient History a...



The OA Interviews:
Frances Pinter
In 2012 serial entrepreneur Frances Pinter

founded a new company called Knowledge Unlatched (KU). The goal, she explained in 2013, was ...

Blog Archive

2020 (4)
2019 (7)
2018 (20)
2017 (18)
2016 (14)
2015 (18)
2014 (13)
2013 (32)
December (1)
November (1)
October (4)
September (5)
August (2)
July (9)
June (2)
Open Access:
Springer
tightens rules
on self-archi...
Open Access:
Emerald's
Green starts
to fade?
May (2)
April (1)
March (2)
February (2)
January (1)
2012 (43)
2011 (22)
2010 (20)
2009 (22)
2008 (14)
2007 (9)
2006 (27)
2005 (31)
2004 (2)

Followers

in addition to the money it makes from subscriptions for the same journals).
What is Springer doing to prevent double-dipping?

A: In 2004, when Springer introduced Open Choice for the majority of its subscription journals, it committed to adjusting subscription prices once the share of paid Open Choice articles reached a significant threshold. Three years later, as the number of authors taking up the open access option increased, these adjustments began. During the preparation of the 2011 price list, the annual analysis of the data showed that the first journals had reached shares of paid Open Choice articles of 8% and more. Subsequently, as announced to the research and library community, their subscription prices were adjusted by that share. This practice has continued ever since.

Q: Finally, can you say how the change to Springer's policy will improve Open Access? Since it will surely mean that more papers remain behind paywalls will it not slow down rather than accelerate OA?

A: That sounds a bit dramatic. The change in policy will not improve or damage open access.

The result of our modification provides a simple and consistent policy for our authors, for funders and for our employees that have daily contact with researchers. We feel that a certain straight-forwardness and ease of understanding was warranted, and this is the benefit for authors and funders.

Open access is healthy and here to stay, and anyone that thinks it is a delicate little flower in danger of being squashed, or is the target of a destructive anti-OA cabal, is simply being unnecessarily alarmist.

Posted by Richard Poynder at [13:52](#)



5 comments:

Anonymous said...

In a recent post to the GOAL mailing list it was [reported](#) that the new policy had been introduced "in reaction to the US, Europe and RCUK policy".

June 25, 2013 2:10 pm



Stevan Harnad said...

ON TRYING TO HOLD GREEN OA AND FAIR-GOLD OA HOSTAGE TO SUBSCRIPTIONS AND FOOLS-GOLD (Part 1 of 2)

The cynical, self-serving spin of Springer's replies is breath-taking: Is it a sign of Springer's new ownership?

Despite the double-talk, applying a 12-month embargo where there has been no embargo for 10 years can hardly be described (or justified) as "simplifying" things for the author, or anyone. It is a pure and simple bid to maintain and maximize revenue streams from both subscriptions and Gold OA.

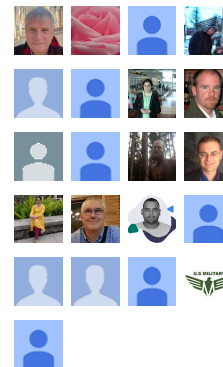
Green OA means immediate OA; hence a 12-month embargo hardly makes it sustainable! That is not OA at all.

As stated already, the distinction between an author's institutional repository and an author's "personal website" (which is of course likewise institutional) is a distinction between different sectors of an institutional disk. The rest is a matter of tagging.

The purpose of research, and of tax-payer funding of research, and of the online medium itself, is certainly not to make the subscription model sustainable for publishers.

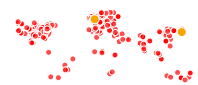
The only service from publishers that needs to be sustained is the management of peer review. Researchers already do all the rest for free (write the papers and peer review the papers); if they can now also archive their peer-reviewed papers and provide online access to them for all users, what justification is there for saying that the subscription model needs to be sustained?

Followers (117) [Next](#)



[Follow](#)

1,648 Pageviews
Nov. 10th - Dec. 10th



Open & Shut? by [Richard Poynder](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 UK: England & Wales License](#).

Permissions beyond the scope of this license are available [here](#)

Paying for Gold OA today, at its current arbitrarily inflated price for a bundle of no longer necessary products and services (print, PDF, archiving, access-provision), is paying for *Fools-Gold*.

And paying for it while subscriptions continue to be sustainable -- hence while paying for them continues to be essential for institutions -- is double-payment: Subscription fees plus Fools-Gold OA fees.

If, in addition, the payment is to the very same hybrid-Gold publisher, then it's not just double-paid Fools-Gold: it also allows double-dipping by the publisher.

Nor is double-dipping corrected if (mirabile dictu) a publisher really does faithfully lower annual subscription fees by every penny of its total annual hybrid Gold revenues, because if an institution (as one subscriber out of, say, 2000 subscribing institutions) pays \$XXX in Fools-Gold OA fees, over and above its subscription fees, then its own share of the subscription rebate is just 1/2000th of the \$XXX that it has double-paid the hybrid Gold publisher. The rest of the rebate goes to the other 1999 beneficiaries of that institution's hybrid-Gold Fools-Gold double-payment.

And this disparity for the hybrid double-payer would persist until (as Springer hopes), all institutions are paying today's Fools-Gold instead of subscriptions. That would be a perfect way for publishers to sustain today's revenue streams, come what may -- and that's exactly what Springer hopes to do, by holding Green OA hostage to embargoes, and thereby holding institutions hostage to subscriptions until they are all coughing them up for Fools Gold instead, its price determined by whatever sustains today's subscription revenues rather than what institutions and researchers actually need -- and what it actually costs.

cont'd

June 25, 2013 4:25 pm 



Stevan Harnad said...

ON TRYING... (Part 2 of 2)

This is why Green OA is anathema to publishers, even as they purport to be "all for OA." For Green OA is the only thing that would force publishers to downsize to the true essentials of peer-reviewed research publishing in the online era, instead of continuing to exact vastly inflated prices for mostly obsolete products and services, just in order to sustain their current revenue streams and their current M.O..

(Of course Springer changed its policy in part because of Finch/RCUK: Green OA and Green OA mandates were already anathema, but Green publishers back-peddalling on that alone would have looked very bad: all stick and no carrot. Finch/RCUK provided the perfect carrot: government funds to pay for Fools-Gold, including hybrid Fools-Gold -- with the government not only funding the Fools-Gold option, but explicitly preferring it over cost-free Green. An offer no publisher could refuse, and a perfect cover for taking it, under the pretext of complying with government mandates, simplifying things for authors, and facilitating OA -- in the form of lucrative Fools-Gold OA.)

But it's not that easy to keep holding the entire worldwide research community hostage to an obsolete technology and outrageous, unnecessary prices, simply by embargoing Green OA.

First, as noted, the distinction between an author's institutional repository and the author's institutional website won't wash: The difference is just in what we name them. Springer authors can go ahead and provide immediate, unembargoed Green OA on Springer's current policy.

But even if Springer then bites the bullet, embargoes all OA self-archiving, and admits that it has stopped being a Green publisher (in order to protect its current revenue streams come what may), authors can still deposit immediately; and if they wish to comply with Springer's embargo, they can set access to the immediate-deposit as Closed Access. The facilitated reprint request Button can then allow any would-be user to request -- and the author to provide -- an eprint with just one click each, almost-immediately.

This Almost-OA will not only serve research needs almost as well as OA

itself during the embargo, but it will also have the same effect, almost as quickly, as immediate Green OA, in forcing publishers to cut costs, downsize, and convert to Fair-Gold, at an affordable, sustainable price, precisely because it make the subscription model unsustainable.

This is why it is so important that all institutional and funder mandates should be immediate-deposit mandates (regardless of whether the deposit is immediately-OA or embargoed).

Harnad, S (2012) *The Optimal and Inevitable outcome for Research in the Online Age*. *CILIP Update* September 2012

Houghton, J. & Swan, A. (2013) *Planting the Green Seeds for a Golden Harvest: Comments and Clarifications on "Going for Gold"*. *D-Lib Magazine* 19 (1/2)

June 25, 2013 4:59 pm 

Anonymous said...

Well, it is a "simple and consistent" message coming from Springer. Repeatedly.

June 27, 2013 10:48 am 



Stevan Harnad said...

SPRINGER'S SELF-SERVING SPIN

Springer: *"Springer, which has been committed to open access in deeds, not just words, for almost 10 years, is focused on offering two models which we believe to be stable and sustainable: embargoed green open access, and immediate gold open access."*

That's two models that are designed to sustain Springer's current revenue streams: charging for Fools Gold and embargoing cost-free Green, so that Green cannot provide immediate OA and force down the price of pre-Green Fools Gold to post-Green Fair Gold.

Springer: *"We modified the [former Springer unembargoed Green] policy to make it simple and consistent for our authors, for funders and for our employees, as all forms of open access continue to grow."*

Translation: We embargoed Green in order to hold OA hostage to our current revenue streams.

Springer: *"In order to ensure that green open access deposit remains sustainable on a large scale, we are standardizing the embargo period for all repository archiving to 12 months."*

Translation: We embargoed Green in order to hold OA hostage to our current revenue streams.

Springer: *"this means that Springer authors can deposit into a funder repository after a 12-month embargo period even if the funder does not require the author to do so." Whereas formerly Springer authors could deposit immediately upon publication.*

Springer: *"www.eprints.org describes institutional repositories, e.g. hosted by Eprint, as "a collection of digital documents [... which] share the same metadata, making their contents interoperable with one another." Author websites on the other hand serve various purposes and are not specifically created for document collection."*

All websites have metadata. Interoperability allows the metadata to be harvested by service-providers. Interoperability is a matter of degree. All websites are harvestable (e.g., by google). What is Springer's point? That there is a threshold on degree of interoperability that distinguishes an "institutional website" from an "institutional repository"? There is no such threshold point. And if there were, it would be arbitrary and irrelevant to the justification of a Green OA embargo, which would, as always, rest purely on the publisher's attempt to hold OA hostage to its current revenue streams.

Springer: *"We have eliminated from our policy the distinction between institutional repositories and others, such as subject and funder repositories, and created one simple rule that applies across the board -- authors may deposit in any repository they like, and regardless of whether they are required by a mandate or not, as long as the embargo*

period is observed."

Translation: Formerly we endorsed immediate, unembargoed Green OA self-archiving, now we are embargoing it in order to hold OA hostage to our current revenue streams.

Springer: *"This supports green OA by making it sustainable, and therefore making it possible for Springer as a publisher to actively encourage and facilitate it. It also helps to clarify the respective benefits of the Green and Gold models, each of which is likely to have a place going forward."*

Translation: We embargoed Green in order to hold OA hostage to our current revenue streams.

July 21, 2013 3:39 pm 

[Post a Comment](#)

[Newer Post](#)

[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)

Subscribe to: [Post Comments \(Atom\)](#)

Website maintained by [NARKAN](#). Powered by [Blogger](#).